



R.R. “Bob” Greive

R.R. “Bob” Greive began his political career in 1946 at the age of twenty-seven when he won his first election for the state senate. A Democrat from West Seattle representing the Thirty-Fourth District, Greive quickly moved up in his party’s leadership ranks. He was an active campaigner and fundraiser for fellow Democrats and ultimately served sixteen years as the Senate majority leader. Greive’s attention to detail and dedication to his political goals also made him a master of the redistricting process. Over three decades he served as “Mr. Redistricting” for the Democrats in the Legislature.

Read the full text of an interview with Senator Greive, [*R.R. “Bob” Greive: An Oral History*](#), on the Oral History Program’s Web site.

of what we were doing and supported the changes, which gave us more cover. You could say that it didn't truly reflect their views. Maybe it did and maybe it didn't; we'll never know.

In King County they voted to support Initiative 199, but I don't think there were three people on that floor other than maybe the one or two of us, like Mike Gallagher and myself, who knew what it did. All they knew it was good for King County and gave us more representation. The Republicans, I think, were a good deal better informed. They unanimously supported it.

Now the Young Democrats also didn't support it, but that was because of a Young Democrat House member by the name of Andy Hess, who later became a senator from Ed Munro's district. He went before the Young Democrats and gave them a big speech and so forth, and as far as I know there was no opposition or no intelligent discussion of exactly what the district did. So he had the interest, and he got an awful good district.

Ms. Boswell: The League of Women Voters believed that the changes you made to the redistricting plan far exceeded the powers to amend an initiative granted to the Legislature. They filed suit in the state courts, but the state Supreme Court ultimately upheld your amendment. Can you tell me a little bit about that action?

Senator Greive: In the final analysis when this went to court, we had a funny situation.

George Prince was appointed as a special assistant attorney general and compensated by the Attorney General to bring the action, because the Attorney General never approved of what we were doing. Before the initiative the Attorney General was pretty much on the other side every chance he got. He was about to run for governor, and, in my opinion, was very prejudiced and wanted to be on the popular side.

Ms. Boswell: And that was John O'Connell?

Sen. Greive: Yes. From our point of view, we didn't, of course, agree with John O'Connell. He also got a chance to appoint the lawyers to defend the state, and he appointed Marshall Neill. Now Marshall Neill was a state senator. He was with us, and he eventually became a judge. I knew him very well, and he wasn't particularly an expert on constitutional matters and played little or no part in the thing. I objected to being in a position of having our own defender be from the state Senate. And so they finally agreed to name Lyle Iversen. I don't know whether they took Marshall Neill off or not, but basically Lyle Iversen had represented the election department from the attorney general's office in years gone by and was an expert in election matters; he handled our case. And that was because I asked them to. I went over and made an issue out of it.

Ms. Boswell: And so John O'Connell got involved enough to have Prince be the attorney for whoever sued?

Sen. Greive: Yes. Well, Prince's wife was very active in the League of Women Voters, and, interestingly, he also played a part in later redistricting actions.

After the redistricting battles of 1956 and 1957, the heated conflict surrounding redistricting cooled for a few years. But 1962 saw the reemergence of redistricting as a major divisive issue in Washington State politics, with new players and new pressures such as the involvement of district and federal courts.